

HISD PRESS RELEASE

Westbury HS grad to become commander of International Space Station

Students to watch transfer of command ceremony live

April 15, 2021 – A Houston Independent School District alumna who graduated from Westbury High School and is currently aboard the International Space Station will become commander of the ISS today.

Shannon Walker, a 1983 graduate of Westbury, says the high expectations of her former HISD teachers fueled her space ambitions.

“We are proud to know that Dr. Walker’s HISD education inspired her to become involved in the space program and then become an astronaut,” HISD Interim Superintendent Grenita Lathan said. “On Thursday, we will celebrate her promotion to Commander of the International Space Station. It is an honor that has been years in the making and is well deserved.”

ISS command is transferring to Walker because Russian commander Sergey Ryzhikov is leaving the station on April 16. When Walker takes command, she will be making history as the first native Houstonian to be commander of the space station. Students at Westbury High School will watch the historic event live Thursday afternoon.

“We like to call Johnson Space Center the home of the astronauts, and all of them live here while they’re training and supporting human spaceflight,” said Johnson Space Center Director Mark Geyer. “But in Shannon’s case, she’s a homegrown Houstonian, and we couldn’t be prouder for our community to have her representing Space City as commander of the space station.”

Walker is a member of NASA’s SpaceX Crew-1 mission that flew to the space station on the Dragon spacecraft, the first commercial human spacecraft system. Her time as ISS commander will end later this month. She and her fellow Crew-1 astronauts are nearing the end of a six-month science mission that included research investigations.

Walker joined NASA in 1987 as a robotics flight controller for the space shuttle program. She began work on the ISS program in 1995 and was selected to become an astronaut in 2004. Walker completed her first spaceflight in 2010 for Expeditions 24 and 25 to the International Space Station.

She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in physics from Rice University in 1987. She later earned a Master of Science and a Ph.D. in physics from Rice.

The change of command ceremony will be broadcast live on April 15 on NASA Television, the [NASA app](#), and the NASA [website](#) beginning at 2:45 p.m. CDT.

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The Houston Independent School District is the largest school district in Texas and the seventh-largest in the United States, with 280 schools and more than 209,772 students. The 333-square-mile district is one of the largest employers in the Houston metropolitan area, with more than 27,000 employees.

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